

and disrespectful words of the goddess. Immediately the mob attacked him. His comrades went to his assistance and a serious riot ensued, during which the Praetorians would have massacred the citizens had they not been with difficulty restrained. All the authorities, indeed, agree that a perfect reign of terror prevailed at Rome after Maxentius's victory over Alexander in Africa, while Maxentius himself is depicted as a second Commodus or Nero.

One of the most vivid pictures of the tyrant is given in the Panegyric already quoted. The orator speaks of Maxentius as a "stupid and worthless wild-beast" (*stultum et nequam animal*) skulking for ever within the walls of the palace and not daring to leave the precincts. Fancy, he exclaims, an indoor Emperor, who considers that he has made a journey and achieved an expedition if he has so much as visited the Gardens of Sallust! Whenever he addressed his soldiers, he would boast that, though he had colleagues in the Empire, he alone was the real Emperor ; for he ruled while they kept the frontiers safe and did his fighting for him. And then he would dismiss them with the three words: "*Frui-mini/ Dissipate! Prodigite!*" Such an invitation to drunkenness, riot, and debauch would not be unwelcome to the swaggering Praetorians and to the numerous bands of mercenaries which Maxentius had collected from all parts of the world.

We ought not, perhaps, to take this scathing invective quite literally. For all his vices, Maxentius was probably not quite the hopeless debauchee he is represented to have been. It is at least worth